The Kitchen Table Archetype is Dead… At least in Canadian National Sport Organizations

Milena M. Parent, University of Ottawa
Ashley Thompson, University of Ottawa
Marijke Taks, University of Ottawa
Erik L. Lachance, University of Ottawa
Russell Hoye, La Trobe University
Michael L. Naraine, Brock University
Benoit Séguin, University of Ottawa

Problem and Purpose

Organizational theorists have previously used archetypes to understand, compare and contrast organizations on what would now be considered governance principles (e.g. performance), an approach used by Kikulis, Slack and Hinings (1992) on Canadian national sport organization (NSO) archetypes. Since then, there have been multiple environmental changes, including technological and legal changes. Although there has been a shift away from archetypes towards governance principle indicators, measurement and consistency issues remain (Parent & Hoye, 2018). Therefore, we integrated governance principles into an archetype analysis of NSOs to determine 1) what archetypes exist today; and 2) the implications of these archetypes for researchers and practitioners.

Literature Review

We draw on the seminal work of Kikulis et al. (1992, 1995), which highlighted three main archetypes for Canadian NSOs: the kitchen table, boardroom and executive office. These were determined based on criteria of effectiveness, domain, orientation, complexity, and principles of organizing. We also drew on the recent slate of governance research and indicators, namely performance, accountability, transparency, participation, board composition, and capacity (e.g., Chappelet & Mrkonjic 2019; Dowling, Leopkey & Smith, 2018; Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015; Geeraert, Alm & Groll, 2014).

Methodology

We undertook a landscape survey of all Sport Canada-funded NSOs and obtained a 55% response rate. NSO budgets ranged from $140,000 to $24 million CAD; NSO full-time equivalent (FTE) staff ranged from none to 58, and boards ranged from four to 15 members.

Cluster analyses were performed for groups of two to six clusters for each variable (capacity, values, complexity, board composition, funding source, performance, internal and external accountability, transparency, and stakeholder participation).

Results

Depending on the individual variables, groups of three, four or five clusters provided the best fit. The capacity-based clusters revealed (unsurprisingly) small to extra-large capacity NSOs, and the internal accountability clusters did not provide significant differentiation. We found the values (sport participation/growth and high performance) used by Kikulis et al. (1992) no longer differentiated NSOs; however, good governance, stakeholder engagement and diversity values did. The clusters based on the Kikulis et al. variables resulted in the disappearance of the kitchen table archetype. Combining all variables (excluding internal accountability) resulted in four clusters: boardroom, CEO-centric, professional, and mature governance. The cluster characteristics will be detailed during the presentation.

Discussion & Contributions

Our findings highlight that 1) in Canada, the kitchen table is dead; 2) the new small NSOs are the boardroom and CEO-centric NSOs; 3) even small NSOs can work on good governance principles; and 4) using an archetype approach can help us examine governance evolution and changes over time (e.g., it appears that there may be two
potential governance archetype pathways). Our approach allows researchers to evaluate organizations based on their ideal-type and compare and contrast organizations more holistically.